



Why Did I Take This Position? — Why Did We Hire This Person?

These are the last words anyone wants to hear. They signify that a terrible mistake has been made by one or both parties—a mistake that can cost all dearly.

Hiring the wrong person or taking the wrong position in one's career can be an expensive mistake. It is like a marriage or any other significant relationship. Little or insufficient thought and time invested upfront results in a lot of pain, as well as time and money wasted in the end.

To avoid this you have to know what you are getting into, why, and under what circumstances. Each party should know well in advance what the other brings, what to expect, anticipated results, and what resources are required on the part of each to make those results likely to occur.

More specifically, asking the right questions and active attentive listening can be your best safeguards.

Here are some open-ended and positive questions that will help you avoid these situations and gain the clarity so crucial to success for all concerned.

1. What is the organization's fundraising history and for the position? What is the baseline—total \$ raised, new donors and gifts each year, total # of donors?
2. What are your expectations of this position in the first 180 days?
3. Tell me/us what you think you need to achieve in the first 180 days?
4. Are volunteers/the board involved in fundraising? How? Do they all give?
5. What is my relationship with, and access to, the Board in regards to fundraising?
6. Was there a predecessor to this position? How long was he/she here? Why was he/she successful?
7. How are annual (and long-term campaign) goals established—i.e., the process, timeline, types of data, and considerations?
8. Is there a formal strategic planning process? Is fundraising involved early on?
9. Is the organization as being on sound financial footing—no “panic” fundraising?
10. What are the key indicators or metrics for evaluating this position?
11. Given the mission, what are the organization's top three priorities?
12. Who is in charge of fundraising? What is his/her relationship to the CEO?

This may all seem a bit long. Not really when each considers what is at stake. Time up front will pay handsome dividends down the road for the organization and the person being hired.

There are other questions like corporate culture, personality, salary, opportunities to grow, etc. However in my experience, most mistakes in hiring or being hired can be traced to lack of clarity and information on the preceding questions. Happy hunting!